

APPROVED SEPTEMBER 26, 2023

Montgomery County Community Action Board
Zoom Meeting
June 27, 2023

MINUTES

CAB Members in Attendance: Valerie Chatfield-Smith, Lisa Conlon, Erika Conner, Denise Fredericks, Danette Lawrence, Lisette Orellana Engel, Will Kenlaw, Pamela Lockett, Evelyn Okutu, Myriam Paul, Claudia Simmons, Mike Subin, and Zelda Wafer-Jones

CAB Members Absent: Elaine Carballo, Jeffery Johnson, and Timothy Robinson

CAA Staff: Sharon Strauss and Leah Goldfine

Guests: Jessica Blasic, MCPS Head Start/PreK; Betty Lam, DHHS Office of Community Affairs Chief; Sue Myers, Consultant; and Delquanda Turner Smith, Consultant

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:32 pm.

Consent Agenda

Denise moved to approve the consent agenda. Claudia seconded the motion and all present voted in favor. The consent agenda included the minutes from the April 25, 2023 CAB meeting; minutes from the May 23, 2023 CAI graduation; meeting evaluations summary from April 25, 2023; Executive Director's Report; Budget reports; TESS and Navigation reports; VITA report; Head Start report; Jessica Blasic's resume; Head Start Corrective Action Plan; contracts report; staff liaison's report; draft CAB meeting calendar for FY24; CAB testimony: The HOME Act; CAI post-program survey summary; BCC travel and dependent care reimbursement form; Power Point: Strategic Planning Overview; notes from Strategic Planning Committee meeting; and summary of CAB's advocacy during the legislative session

Executive Director's Report

Board members received a detailed written Executive Director's report with updates on the agency's programs, along with budget reports, TESS and Navigation reports, and a VITA report. Sharon reported that the new Montgomery County Self-Sufficiency Standard report will be finalized by the end of the summer. It will include personal quotes from CAI graduates regarding their challenges trying to meet the Standard. The report will also include information about the County's Guaranteed Income Pilot Program, along with the Working Families Income Supplement and state EITC. Sharon also reported that she Zelda presented on the Standard at the Navigation Summit earlier that week.

Following Sharon's retirement in September, Charlene will serve as the acting Executive Director. Sharon noted that recruitment for a new Executive Director can begin before she officially retires.

Sharon reported that she and Erika spoke at a recent East County Citizens Advisory Board's Quality of Life and Services Committee meeting. They spoke about Community Action's history in East County and how the agency is still serving East County through navigation. They also discussed the CAI and the possibility of offering college credits. Erika noted that they also spoke about affordable housing and the need for more mixed-use housing in East County.

CAB Updates

Board members received a detailed written report, with updates from the CAB staff liaison.

Staff noted that the CAI will begin accepting applications for the FY24 program in mid-July.

Staff reminded CAB members that their reimbursement request forms for all of FY23 were due the following morning. This would allow processing of the forms before the end of the County fiscal year (June 30).

Board members were informed that the process to recruit new members has been delayed due to delays at the County Executive's office. The three board members who exceeded their term limits in October can remain on the board in good standing until new CAB members are appointed, which may take several months. Additionally, staff have reached out to the Office of Human Rights regarding a new Human Rights Commission representative on the CAB. This process has also been delayed, but the OHR will select a new member to serve on the CAB as soon as possible.

Staff noted that there are tentative plans to do some site visits at CAA partners organizations, with contracts monitored through the agency. Board members were asked to review the list of CAA partners and report their preferences for which organizations they would like to visit.

Although the CAB voted electronically to support Council Bill 16-23 – The HOME Act, advisory boards must also conduct a vote at the next meeting so that there is a formal record of the vote at a public meeting. Myriam moved to have the CAB support The HOME Act, which would cap annual rent increases at 3% or the Voluntary Rent Guidelines (whichever is lower). Erika seconded the motion. Evelyn, Valerie, Zeldia, Lisa, Danette, Claudia, and Mike voted to support the motion. Denise voted to oppose it. Pam and Will abstained from the vote.

Earlier in the month, the CAB submitted testimony in support of The HOME Act prior to a Council Committee worksession. The board's testimony was included in the meeting materials.

Strategic Planning Presentation

Consultants Sue Myers and Delquanda Turner Smith led a presentation about the agency's strategic planning process so far. They noted that a previous meeting was held with the CAB Strategic Planning Committee earlier in the month. Sue and Delquanda reviewed the key components of this process, including a survey of Head Start/PreK parents, a survey of staff, and interviews with CAA managers and staff members. The HS/PreK survey indicated an overall very positive impression of the program. There were a few specific concerns about registration and specific incidents that occurred, which have been or are being addressed.

The staff feedback was summarized in four categories: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities or unmet needs, and threats. Board members participated in a discussion of the feedback included in these categories, adding their suggestions for things that were missing. Board members emphasized the knowledge of Community Action in a variety of areas and the collaboration between the agency and board as significant strengths. It was also noted that parents other who are directly impacted by different issues (people with lived experience) should be called on to help make decisions about these issues. Board members also discussed certain populations, such as people with disabilities, who have a lot of unmet needs and should be considered in Community Action's planning.

Sue will incorporate the board members' feedback into the full strategic plan, which will be shared with the CAB upon its completion.

Head Start

Board members received a detailed written Head Start report with updates on the program. They also received Jessica Blasic's resume and the Head Start Corrective Action Plan.

Lisa introduced Jessica Blasic, who will be the new HS/PreK Supervisor following Verna Washington's retirement. Jessica spoke with the board about her background in early childhood education. She is excited to begin working with the CAB.

CAB Updates Continued

Staff thanked the outgoing Executive Committee members, with a special thank you to Vice Chair Zelda Wafer-Jones. Zelda has served on the CAB since 2017 and on the EC since 2020. She has participated in numerous advocacy efforts and been an active leader in the CAI. She was also the Chair of the Head Start Parent Policy Council, which she represents on the CAB.

Sharon installed the EC members for FY24 who were present at the meeting:

Vice Chair: Claudia Simmons

Secretary: Myriam Paul

At-large members: Erika Conner, Denise Fredericks, Evelyn Okutu, and Mike Subin

Dr. Jeffery Johnson was reelected to serve as the Chair for a second year. He will be installed at the next meeting.

Board members reviewed the proposed FY24 meeting calendar, which was previously reviewed by the EC. The calendar follows the usual schedule of having the EC meeting on the second Tuesday of the month and the CAB meeting on the fourth Tuesday. A few adjustments were made the full meeting in March, April, and May (CAI graduation) due to holidays and the MCPS spring break. The CAB members also discussed the annual retreat, which was tentatively scheduled for August 8. Due to some potential conflicts for certain board members, staff would follow up via email after the meeting to finalize the meeting calendar. Board members would then vote via email to approve the calendar.

Contracts

Board members received a detailed written report with updates on the agency's contract partner organizations.

Adjournment: The meeting ended at 7:27 pm.